Rice University School of Architecture
Spring 2014
ARCH 402 Practice Drawing
Instructor: Samuel Stewart-Halevy

Schedule: MWF 1:00-5:00
Location: Anderson Hall 101
Office Hours: M 11:00-12:00
or by appointment, scheduled at least two days in advance

Jason Rhoades. *The Costner Complex Perfect Process*. 2001

Description

In this studio, we will take up the late stages of contemporary architectural drawing as sites of speculation and invention. As drawings near completion, they also become increasingly subject to legal and graphic regulation. Today's working drawings are often assemblages of used parts—the blocks and references of previous projects, cut sheets from manufacturers, and pre-determined dimensions. Lines are copied and pasted, stretched and trimmed in order to accommodate these increasing constraints. In this final stage of design, conventions take hold and documents are exchanged among distant parties. What may have been understood in the past as a process of translation can now be thought of as a series of transactions. The partiality of architectural representation has been replaced with a partiality of expertise as drawings more fully describe their objects while they at the same time reinforce divisions of labor and knowledge.

Without nostalgia, and distanced from the commercial pressures of everyday practice, this studio could become an experimental office, transforming and questioning the ritual motions of late drawing. Over the course of fourteen weeks, the class will operate as a collective body, circulating drawings internally, delegating work to outside entities, and absorbing the graphic remains of unfinished projects. The schedule will alternate between periods of individual design and coordinated efforts, taking up a wide range of media and formats along the way— written instructions, ghosted drawings, collaborative models, correspondence, and casual sketching to name a few. Techniques introduced in Drawing Practice, including linking, bounding, breaking and blocking, will be employed throughout the semester in order to more precisely define the nature of each exchange. The spatial and temporal features of the studio itself- the organization of the classroom, the duration of each act of design – will be approached with the same critical thinking as the imagined constructions that are invented along the way.

In playing out the routines of drawing exchange within the space of architectural pedagogy, we might produce new knowledge about practices that are at once pervasive and unquestioned. The threshold moments of drawing have yet to be engaged—they remain within the black box.[1]

Questions For the Studio:

1. If architecture is one of the arts, a creative field with its own hermeneutics and something we still would like to ascribe meaning to, then what sort of possible creativity if any could exist in the techniques of outsourcing?

2. What are the impacts of the procedures of drawing exchange on the form of architecture? Is it possible for a work of architecture to "look" outsourced?

3. What are the professional stakes for the student in an era when architecture often begins in medias res as opposed to at the beginning of the sphere of competition?

4. What is the role of the critic in these circumstances and what new kinds of vocabulary will they use and investigations will they perform in order to stay abreast of developments in the field, while still being able to create meaning and historicity for an architecture that seems ever more beyond their grasp?

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[1] Banham, Reyner. "A Black Box: The Secret Profession of Architecture." *New Statesman and Society*, 12 October 1990

Sequence

The studio sequence is organized as a reversal of the typical design process, beginning with the elaboration of a set of material and product specifications before moving back towards a schematic proposal. Along the way, loops, shortcuts, and outlets will be introduced, complicating the linear progression from the concrete to the abstract and establishing some reciprocity between different stages of the design.

1. Finishing
January 13th-January 24th

Beginning with a series of written descriptions of material properties (roughness, elasticity, flatness, etc), mechanical motion (rotating, sliding, locking, etc.), and measurements, the class will develop a library of invented specifications for finishes, equipment, and fixtures that can be translated into two and three dimensional representations or abstracted in the form of schedules.

2. Blocking
January 27th-February 7th

In the second set of weeks, the finishes will be incorporated into larger details that combine material and structural components within the same assembly. These details will serve as the "blocks" of the project- static elements that can be reshuffled to produce multiple versions of larger constructions, inserted within the unfinished drawings of historical projects, published in the form of a pattern book, or marketed as part of a stock drawing service.

3. Bounding
February 10th-February 28th

In an inversion of the typical process of architectural consultancy, students will attempt to wrap each other's details within a set of "bounding lines"- the contours of a wall, floor, foundation, or enclosure. It is here that the limits of the project will come into focus, through the outlining of plans, sections and elevations. Physical modeling, using elastic materials for the boundaries and rigid materials for the blocks will inform the graphic work, allowing each student to trace lineaments around their received bodies of details.

^. Launching
January 17th, February 3rd, March 2nd -3rd, March 28th

Throughout the semester, we will leave the studio on intermittent excursions to visit archives and exhibitions, and scout locations for sites. These trips will serve as extensions of the classroom- opportunities for group discussions mobile work.

4. Linking
March 10th-March 21st

Returning to Houston following Spring Break, students will begin to coordinate their drawings using a virtual network of external references. Through the superimposition of digital files, or "ghosting," the class will be able to view and react to one another's work in real time. While drawing software will be critical in this regard, the class should also imagine alternative ways to produce "links" in the physical realm.

5. Breaking
March 24th-April 4th

Having aligned a set of drawings, the class will begin to pull them apart again, using techniques such as the break line, implied symmetry, poché, and missing scales, to create lacunae within the total representation of the project. The task here is to define what is unknown about the work, and to delimit those gaps or ellipses in drawing with precision.

6. Filling
April 7th-April 18th

Working within these lacunae, students will commence a period of surplus drawing- flooding the gaps with an excess of information. Here the work may become unmanageable, calling for a quantity and complexity of graphic and physical representations that could only be produced in "overtime."

7. Erasing
April 18th-April 21st

Adopting a technique from figure drawing, in which students cover their paper with charcoal and then begin to draw through erasure, the final days of the studio will be spent in revision- removing lines to form new openings and renaming elements to give them new meaning. This process of erasure may result in a condensed version of the original, or perhaps in an entirely new work.

Critique and Presentation

The adaptation of the studio-critique model to this collaborative structure necessitates new forms of review and evaluation. Over the course of the semester, groups of outside critics will be brought into the space of the studio to respond to the active work of the students. The critics will be called upon to think of counterfactual scenarios for the work at different stages- imagining some alternative event or decision that might have resulted in a different outcome. Group critique will be an essential component of the work- students must be able to respond to one another's work.

During the semester, the studio will start a blog as a way of disseminating images and statements about the work that is being designed in the studio while at the same time receiving and responding to architectural media that circulate on the internet on a daily basis. The blog will involve collaborative writing in the form of online reviews of contemporary works of architecture published under a chosen pseudonym.

Tentative Studio Schedule
All times 1.00-5.00pm unless otherwise noted.

Jan

M	13	All School Meeting
		Studio Introduction
W	15	1_Finishing
F	17	^_Launching 1 (Surrealism Trip)
M	20	*Martin Luther King Day*
W	22	1_Finishing
F	24	**1_Guest Crit**
M	27	2_Blocking
W	29	2_Blocking
F	31	2_Blocking

Feb

M	3	^_Launching 2 (Blog Workshop)
W	5	2_Blocking
F	7	2_Blocking
M	10	3_Bounding
W	12	3_Bounding
F	14	**3_Guest Crit**
M	17	3_Bounding
W	19	3_Bounding
F	21	3_Bounding
M	24	3_Bounding
W	26	3_Bounding
F	28	**3_Group Crit**

Mar

S	2-	^_Launching 3
M	-3	(Kimbell Archive/ Perot Museum)
M	10	4_Linking
W	12	4_Linking
F	14	4_Linking
M	17	4_Linking
W	19	4_Linking
F	21	**4_Guest Crit**
M	24	5_Breaking
W	26	5_Breaking
F	28	^_Launching 4 (Location Scouting)
M	31	5_Breaking

Apr

W	2	**5_Guest Crit**
F	4	*Midterm Recess*
M	7	6_Filling
W	9	6_Filling
F	11	6_Filling
M	14	6_Filling
W	16	**6_Guest Crit**
F	18	7_Erasing
M	21	**Erasers Down**

Evaluation

Grading will be based on the degree to which submitted work satisfies the requirements and objectives of each assignment. In addition, grading for each project will reflect student participation, commitment, effort and improvement over the semester. The primary goal of the course is to foster independent thinking and strong conceptual bases for each stage of design. Students are encouraged to abandon rote ways of working and thinking, and to develop their own constraints for moving forward with design. A grade of "A" requires an original, thought provoking, experimental, project developed to a high standard of completion. Spectacular failures can be A level projects. Doing merely what is required is the definition of a "C" project. Rigorous experimentation and risk taking is rewarded over playing it safe.

Students must complete all projects to an acceptable level and obtain a passing average in order to receive credit for this course. Students will receive feedback after each assignment and formal mid-term advising about their progress in the semester, but not a formal mid-term letter grade.

Learning Objectives

This studio will operate as a laboratory of methods. Each student will develop their own approach to design through working with and against an array of established techniques. The intent of the studio is to rethink processes that underlie much of contemporary architectural production, while forging a new role for the design studio as a space in which practice can be tested.

Students will:

- Pursue independent design and research and explore design as a form of research.
- Develop a critical approach to representational and design techniques that are pervasive in the field
- Articulate a critical position relative to the organization of architectural practice
- Produce drawings to a high graphic standard.
- Develop a project at a range of scales – urban, landscape, and building, through to tectonic considerations.
- Demonstrate dexterity and understanding of design and craft in all work.
- Work through a range of representation modes and complete all the required drawings and materials on time
- Work consistently each week to develop their ideas and projects
- Experiment and take risks

Key NAAB student performance criteria covered in this studio include: A5, A11, B1, B3, B4, C1, C2

GENERAL STUDIO POLICIES

Studio Culture

Students are expected to use the studio space as a laboratory for production, reflection and conversation during the semester. Take advantage of the resources of your colleagues, the energy of the studio, and the space provided by the school by working in studio.

Respect your colleagues in the lab and keep the space as clean and orderly as it needs to be to facilitate a working atmosphere. A designated area for studio meetings and pin ups consisting of a large table and space and a wall should be kept clear and useable at all times.

This means, of course, that your computer needs to be in the studio, at least when you are there. We recommend insuring it and having a lock.

Students, as well as instructors, are expected to treat each other with mutual respect as outlined in the RSA Studio Culture policy, available from the School office and/or ASR representatives.

Attendance

Studio will run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, promptly from 1:00pm to 5:00pm. Students are expected to be present and working in studio during these times. Absences for social engagements, holidays, etc. will not be accepted. If you are sick, do not come to studio. If you cannot make it to studio due to illness or some other similar reason, email the section instructor as soon as possible, preferably before studio. Unexcused studio absences will significantly affect the final semester grade. Studio class times are to be used for studio work.

Deadlines

Deadlines will be clearly defined for work expected each week and for the assignments. Pencils down deadlines may be instituted not just for the final deadline but for interim deadlines and the honor code will apply equally to all such deadlines. Required deliverables will be made clear at the beginning of each project. Also, remember to build in time for printing.

Late Work

All assignments are due in class at the specified time and date. Project deadlines can be extended only in cases of illness or incapacity, or special circumstances. Unexcused late work will be penalized by one letter grade per day it is late. Requests for such extensions should be made before the project deadline, as soon as is possible, in writing to the section instructor.

Readings

Students are expected to complete required readings and participate in class discussion. Select readings will be assigned to students to moderate a class discussion. Participation in seminars is expected.

Reviews/ Seminars

It is important for each student to participate not only in the review of their own work, but in the reviews of the work of fellow students. Participation for the entirety of every class of reviews is mandatory.

Honor Code

All work in the studio is governed by the Rice University Honor Code. You are welcome to collaborate with each other, to share ideas with each other and even help each other out finish a drawing or model in a pinch. However, unless the assignment is clearly a group project, your work

should represent your ideas and be substantially the product of your labor. In written materials and analysis all scanned, copied images or paraphrases or quoted text needs to be clearly referenced using a standard citation style. All text and footnoting should be in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. For further information on the Chicago Manual of Style, visit: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html

ADA

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with their instructor during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

Back Up Your Work

At some point in the semester, it is likely that your files will become corrupted, your hard drive will crash, your folder will be accidentally deleted or a small meteor will hit your computer. None of these events, or similar technical errors, is a satisfactory excuse for incomplete projects or extended deadlines.

BACK UP incessantly, every day or every other day, to a 2nd hard drive, or a folder elsewhere. Get a free dropbox or google docs account and use it. In addition, also burn all data every week to a CD/DVD. Keep all backups until the end of the semester; keep them separate from your computer. Two backups are better than one (a jump drive can always be corrupted or lost, a cloud resource could always shut down or be hacked, a hard drive could always crash). Make this a habit.

NEVER leave your only copies on a network resource, hard drive or worse, on the hard drive of a Rice computer lab computer (such as those in RAVL). NEVER work off a network resource or hard drive (such as Cyclops). You are almost guaranteed to loose work if you do.

You should keep redundant copies as records of each semesters studios work, preferably in two locations (such as at your parents house as well as with you).

Safety

LOCK your computer to your desk using a cable lock or other similar device. Insure it. CLOSE and LOCK the doors and windows of the studio if you are alone in the studio or the last person to leave. Please exercise extreme caution when cutting, drilling, or using the woodshop. Do not do such things if you are sleepy. Do not leave sharp items lying around studio or on the floor.
All spray painting, resin casting, foam cutting and other activities that can produce fumes must be done in designated areas of the school and NOT in studio or in the halls.

Studio Template

It is intended that the research and design work of the studio be published to open the discourse that emerges from the studio to a larger architectural audience. An InDesign Template has been created to create graphic consistency of the book spreads.

Documentation

The RSA requires full documentation of all final drawings as well as materials used to create such drawings; an additional copy of this documentation must be provided on DVD/CD to your section instructor. Requirements for the organization of this material will be provided at the end of the semester and must be followed. Your grade will not be released until this material has been submitted. The RSA may additionally need to archive models produced during the studio.